1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF12 North China AF12

G. Narrative and Song Recitations

545 Public entertainment in North China also includes narrative and song recitations with percussion and string accompaniment. This is called ku-tz'u or ch'ü-i. Since they are informally staged, they are more adaptable to new content, and the singer or narrator is free to give his own version of the moral of the story. Most of the singers and narrators obtain their stories and verses from old novels. Now the Chinese Communists have encouraged them to use the new novels, such as Brother and Sister in Land-clearing and the Marriage of Hsiao-erh-hei, and they are encouraged to compose their own texts. Han Ch'i-hsiang and Wang Chung-san are the two ch'ü-i artists most praised by the Communists.

536 It should be mentioned that the Communists have elevated the social position of actors and actresses from that of "entertainers" to that of "artists." Actors and actresses have their own organizations in the capital and are invited to take part in the deliberation of new policies pertaining to their profession "under the leadership of the Party."

III. ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

552. Painting and the Plastic Arts

When one talks of painting in Communist China one is immediately reminded of Ch'i

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536 533 in the hsien. Usually there were 15 or 16 men in a group. This number would include actors, musicians, make up and property men. Most of them were farmers during the growing season and gave the yang ke as amateurs or semi-amateurs for special village celebrations or in connection with the temple fairs. A few of the better actors apparently were paid a salary for their yang ke work. Some of the actors took boys as apprentices and taught them the singing and acting. There evidently was no fixed term for such an apprenticeship. The principal requirement for the boy was that he should be smart, have a good memory, and possess a reasonably good voice. As most of the yang ke players were illiterate, the roles were memorized and handed on from one actor to another. Female parts were all played by men. The costumes were of the type often used in the Chinese theater, but generally were not very elaborate.

536 527 545 New Year's time, especially at the time of the Lantern Festival, the spring and autumn festivals, the temple fairs, and after the harvest were the times when the yang ke were given. If the village had no permanent stage a temporary one was easily and cheaply erected. Sometimes a mat shed, costing about $15, was added to cover the audience, most of whom stood in the open space in front of the stage. No seats were provided, though sometimes carts would be ranked along the side of the mat shed to provide an advantageous position for some of the women spectators.

If the troupe were acting in its own village the cost of the plays was about $10 per day. This would cover the food for the actors and other incidentals. If they were playing in another village they were paid somewhat more. The money to pay for the yang ke was generally raised by assessing the entire village, usually according to the amount of farm land owned. As the plays were generally given for three or four days, sometimes for as long as 10 days, the actors needed a large repertoire.

536 533 Working with the yang ke groups in the Experimental District we were able to record, perhaps for the first time, the texts of 48 plays. These have been published as part of our Chinese report. At the end of the chapter we give the complete dialogue of four plays and the stories of seven more, as samples of the different kinds of plays.

One of the yang ke players was persuaded to make records of the singing of some of the characters in the plays. Samples of four different parts have been transcribed to give an idea of the tunes and tempos.

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536 533 singing for his own pleasure and to scare away any wandering spirits that might be about.

The reports spoke especially of the large numbers of women and girls who attended the yang ke plays. They were one of the big recreational events of the year and all the community made the most of them.

545 369 533 Theatrical performances were also given by troupes of professional actors engaged by some villages and by city organizations, such as the Lantern Association of the West Street, to give plays at New Year's time, for the temple fairs, and for other special occasions. The engagements were usually for a three or four day series of plays. The cost of this entertainment was about $130. The details of the expenditure are given in our report on the Temple Fairs in Chapter XVIII. The expenses of the plays given in the villages were usually paid by all the people in the village, generally by special graduated subscriptions rather than from general village funds. In some instances the amount of a family's subscription was determined by the amount of land the family held. In others the amount asked of each family was arbitrarily fixed, but it usually had some relation to the family's economic status. The subscription was practically obligatory, but we were told of some instances where families had refused to contribute. The collector threatened them with bodily harm if any member of the family went to the plays. In the city the cost was met by the members of the organization promoting the plays.

The spectators were not limited to the inhabitants of the village giving the plays, but came from the surrounding villages as well. It was an occasion for much local visiting and entertaining.

536 776 782 Worship of the gods was closely connected with most if not all of the plays given in 1929. A possible exception was those given for the Tung T'ing fairs, as it was reported that those fairs had no temple connection. If the stage was not set up in or near a temple courtyard where there was an altar, a shrine usually was built opposite the stage so that the gods might be worshiped and know that the plays were given as an offering to them. The people attending the plays combined worship and recreation. Theatrical plays were often given, as a special offering, when the community was seeking help from the gods, asking for rain, or wanting protection from locusts or other pests and disasters. The plays given at the temple fairs were naturally related to the temple worship.

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536 curtained off as a dressing room. The size of the mat shed put up for the audience varied from village to village. Some that we saw were 30 by 60 feet, others 40 by 80 feet with a ceiling of 20 feet or more. No scenery was used but the actors' costumes were very elaborate.

We did not attempt to determine how many villages gave plays during the year.

Some families engaged troupes of actors to perform for a specially elaborate funeral or birthday celebration.

The Dragon Lantern Show, the Ch'i Ch'iao Lantern Show, the Warrior Show, the Lion Show were among other New Year's entertainment provided by different community groups, usually during the Feast of Lanterns. The lantern shows were, of course, given at night. There was a musical accompaniment for all of the shows.

The gaily painted dragon, some 30 feet long, was carried through the streets by eight men. There were lanterns on the ends of the poles that the men carried so the light shone through the golden eyes, from the large red mouth, through the white beard of the papier mache head of the dragon, and through the translucent, scale-decorated cloth of the dragon's body. The carriers made the body twist and turn as the dragon made its way through the crowd. A pearl, a large round ball illuminated by an internal lantern, was carried in front of the dragon, always just out of its reach. To the people the illuminated dragon represented their "imagined, dignified, sublime, grand dragon". The men who carried the dragon kept together by following the tempo of the accompanying musicians.

545 The Ch'i Ch'iao Lantern Show was given by a group who must have done considerable rehearsing together, for their entertainment involved group maneuvers as well as individual dancing. Each of the performers carried a lighted lantern. They were of many different shapes and sizes and decorated with flowers, birds, butterflies, and characters. Some had popular poems written on them. The four large lanterns that led the procession each had a large carefully written character on it. Together they read "Ch'i Ch'iao Lantern Society". The dancers were dressed in figured clothes and hats. After various individual and group maneuvers, the men came together into two groups and, putting their lanterns together, made the illuminated figure of a fisherman and a farmer.

After finishing in one place the group moved on down the street and went through their dances and maneuvers again and again, keeping up

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the entertainment until about midnight. If the weather was clear the full moon added its light to that of the lanterns.

The Warrior Show was given from ten in the morning until six in the evening on the 15th of the first moon. Some 70 or 80 players took part, showing their prowess, agility, and muscular control with different kinds of weapons, spears, lances, tridents, knives, swords, daggers, and staves. Some were individual performances. Others were done in groups of two, three, or four. The latter showed very careful timing and much practice as in many instances the tempo was very fast and the weapons and dancers had to be at just the right place to avoid injury. Some of the individual posturing and muscle control is often called "Chinese boxing" by foreigners.

A flying star, a piece of iron tied to the end of a rope, was used to clear the spectators from the space the company needed for its show.

On the 14th of the first month the head of the Lion Society went from house to house and presented a red New Year's card that announced that the Lions would be entertaining the public on that day. It also probably intimated that a contribution would be greatly appreciated. The activities of the entertaining groups were regularly supported by contributions.

The beating of a drum and gong advertised the beginning of the show. It started with a group of clowns bringing out a wheelbarrow on which sat a man dressed in an old mandarin's robe and hat with black rings painted around his eyes. The wheelbarrow was pushed by a clown dressed as an old man and pulled by one dressed as an old woman.

Then came a boat made of willow twigs decorated with bright cloth. The passengers were a man dressed as a woman and one dressed as a sailor. The motion of the boat kept time with the drum and gong.

When the "boat" finished its voyage two "lions", one green, one red, came out to entertain the crowd with their capers and dances. Each had an embroidered ball with which it played. A man, with a club in his hand, played the part of the lion tamer and danced between the two lions. The show lasted for about an hour, after which the players were invited to go to the home of a well-to-do family for rest and refreshment.

The lion heads were bamboo frames covered with brightly decorated paper. Sometimes the lions were a one man variety, sometimes a two man species with the second man the hind legs and tail.

During the winter days, when there was little work on the farms,

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466 526 men's dormitory. Ball games, in particular the soccer, are also popular. Contests are often arranged with the workers of the Pacific Alkali Factory, and occasionally with the students of the Tangshan Engineering College.

(3) Typical Chinese new year amusements are very much liked by the workers. They are the dragon-lantern, lion-dance, fancy dress stilts, singing, and the boat-and-cart-shows. Owing to unsettled social and political conditions in these years, workers are not so enthusiatic for these shows as they used to be.

(4) A summer conference was held in 1925 by pupils in the Workmen's School. In the conference were held personal interviews, track and field meets, swinging contests, boxing, story telling, music and moving pictures for the amusements of the workers. This conference was discontinued in later years.

466 545 (5) Modern plays are performed by workers and members of the administrative staff. From 1921 to 1925, there were held theatrical performances of this kind two or three times a year. None, however, have been performed during recent years on account of the disturbed conditions in the country.

II. EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

466 873 Among the educational facilities provided by the Chiu Ta Factory may be mentioned: (1) the Workmen's School (2) the Ming Shin Primary School and (3) general educational facilities.

The Workmen's School.—The Workmen's School was first established in March 1921, its teachers being recruited from the administrative staff. But it was closed in June 1923, on account of the difficulty in getting enthusiastic teachers. Under a reorganization plan, in which the Chiu Ta Factory pledged 60 per cent and the Pacific Alkali Works 40 per cent of the total expenses for the support of the school, it was reopened in August 1924. There are in the new school two grades, the general and the special, the courses in each grade extending to three years. One paid teacher is employed to teach the Chinese language, while members of the adminstrative staff volunteer their services to teach other subjects or courses.